

Michigan LEGwork

Department of Labor & Economic Growth

Special Issue Fall 2004

"Spirit of DLEG" Awards Highlight Importance of Values

WITH LARGE GOLD STARS LINING the walkway and top hats and white gloves gracing the tables, our department held its own version of Hollywood's Academy Awards by presenting the first annual "Spirit of DLEG" employee awards at the State of DLEG meeting on September 22.

Last May, every bureau and agency in DLEG was encouraged to nominate a team of workers who best embody DLEG's core values of excellence, inclusion, integrity, teamwork and trust. Eight agencies and bureaus submitted portfolios reflecting why their teams should be recognized. Individuals external to DLEG served as judges, who looked at the teamwork and creativity employed and the customer satisfaction gained.

The grand winner is the **Remote Initial Claims Team** nominated by the **Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA)**. Accepting the star-topped trophy on behalf of the team were **Susan Easton, Timothy E. Johnson, Sara Majer, Robin Middleton** and **Sharon Moffett-Massey**. Each team member received a Spirit of DLEG lapel pin and a certificate.

UIA said this team "weathered the perfect storm and was able to deliver customer satisfaction by working together to overcome obstacles. In 2002, all local UIA offices were closed and numerous talented people retired. Unemployment claims rose nationwide, and Michigan had more than 1 million. Two-thirds of the staff were inexperienced, claims backed up, checks were held up, and negative news stories about the agency were commonplace.

"The team brought the agency back by living DLEG's values. They practiced integrity by answering telephone calls honestly and quickly. That restored trust with their customers, the DLEG executive office, the legislature, and the governor's office. They practiced teamwork and inclusion by working with other agencies to provide the best service possible to their customers. Error reports have dropped 93 percent, the number of re-determination of charges has been reduced by 98 percent, the number of daily visits by claimants is down 87 percent, disputed claims are down 68 percent, and the average telephone hold time has been reduced 91 percent. As a result, the agency has been recognized for its excellence and has received awards from several customers."

The seven other DLEG teams nominated for the Spirit of DLEG Award are also considered winners. Each team member was presented with a spirit lapel pin and certificate.

The **Michigan Employment Security (MES) Board of Review** nominated its executive secretary, **Elaine Pohl**. "Elaine wears many



The Unemployment Insurance Agency's Remote Initial Claims (RIC) Team captured the gold (star) in the "Spirit of DLEG" awards program.

Left to right are Sharon Moffett-Massey, director, Grand Rapids RIC Center; Sue Wood, UIA claims examiner/lead worker, Grand Rapids RIC Center; Charlotte Duncil, president, HSS Division of the Service Employees International Union, Local 517M, Detroit Office; Director Hollister; Sue Easton, manager, UIA Benefits Systems Control; and Sara Majer, lead worker, Employer Customer Relations. The trophy will "travel" each year to DLEG's winning team.

hats and wears them all well," her colleagues said. "She oftentimes steps out of her traditional role as executive secretary. She created a Microsoft database for cases that helped to streamline the Board of Review's operations."

THIS SPECIAL EDITION of Michigan LEGwork attempts to capture for DLEG staff the sum and substance of the State of DLEG meeting held September 22 at Lansing's Potter Park Zoo. This meeting was a follow-up session to the department's "Grow Michigan" meeting in April, when each agency and bureau in the department was provided with the background information needed to develop individual agency/bureau action plans based on the core values of excellence, inclusion, integrity, teamwork and trust. All of the action plans, submitted this summer, have been included in a DLEG Action Plan book; this book is the blueprint for DLEG's immediate future.

Catching the Spirit of DLEG!



"Spirit of DLEG" Awards (Continued)

The **Bureau of Commercial Services (BCS)** nominated all of its employees because the work they do is considered exceptional and embodies DLEG's vision and values. BCS defines its spirit in these phrases: Leadership team promotes growth; Staff training is valued; Excellent work is recognized; Everyone pitches in; and We take pride in our work.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) staff members submitted a most creative nomination using their rendition of the quest for the Holy Grail. They created the "Epic Quest for Cool" and nominated MSHDA's **Cool Cities Team**. Referred to as the royal People Awfully Interested in Neighborhoods, or PAINS, this team worked "tirelessly and collaboratively" to launch Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's Cool Cities project. Nominated were **Rick Ballard, Julie Hales-Smith, Gary Heidel, Charisse Sanders and James Wilfong**.

The **Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety** nominated six staff members considered to have a strong work ethic and scope of knowledge who went the extra mile to help their peers and the public better understand the importance of providing a safe building environment. The nominees were **Susan Brace, Brenda Caron, C. Douglas Dart, William E Fox, Kevin Kalakay, and Erica Planck**.

The schedulers in the **Bureau of Hearings** were commended for their "can do" attitude in shrinking a tremendous load of 20,000 case files while still treating each with individual care. Bureau Director Mike Zimmer said this team has

"an uncanny ability to juggle a number of balls and not let a single one fall." Nominated were **Lynne A. Adamczyk, Sue Decess, Sheila Divo, Kimberly L. Taylor and Susan E Webber**.

The **Workers' Compensation Agency** nominated seven claim investigators from its **Funds Administration Division** who collected over \$900,000 in penalty fines from more than 400 employers who had allowed their workers' compensation insurance coverage to lapse. One of the reasons for this team's success is its ability to collaborate with other offices, such as Compliance and the Office of the Attorney General. The nominees were **Brian Banfield, George Chipman, Ray Dwyer, Ellen Feldpausch, Robert Mills, Jim Messenger and Cheryl Moyer**.

The **Tax Tribunal** nominated **Marijo Wakley and Barb Sierra Smith** for improving the Tax Tribunal's Web pages and other technologies, which conserved financial resources, increased efficiency and improved communications. "All these endeavors reflect values consistent with their work," read the nomination. "The sacrifice is typical for these two employees because they derive greater satisfaction from seeing the system work better for co-workers and taxpayers."



The "Walk of Fame!"



Jim Smiertka, DLEG's organizational development officer and emcee for the event, congratulates Elaine Pohl, MES Board of Review.



Rick Ballard, left, with MSHDA, accepts a Spirit of DLEG lapel pin from Jim Smiertka.

State of DLEG Meeting: Catching the Spirit of DLEG to Grow Michigan



Dan Dykstra, a member of DLEG's Employee Growth and Development Team, facilitates questions that meeting participants posed for a panel of department administrators.



Ruthanne Okun, Denise Hinneburg and Freda Mills with Employment Relations discuss how their bureau can make the most of relationships with other agencies and bureaus within DLEG.



Michael Williams, Bruce Weaver and Asuama Akpabio-Sydney with Labor Market Information & Strategic Initiatives work on the mapping exercise.



Director Hollister chats with James Butler, Michigan Broadband Development Authority.



Gary Heidel with MSHDA explains how his team benefited from the mapping exercise.



Brenda Ely with the Employment Service Agency makes a point.

A Message from the Director

Putting Our Plans to Work

DLEG Director David C. Hollister spoke to more than 130 staff representing each agency and bureau in the department at the State of DLEG meeting September 22. The following are highlights from Director Hollister's presentation:

The Spirit of DLEG winners are certainly outstanding examples of what we can do when we all pull together. I am so proud to be part of their team. It's teamwork that will take us to the next level and make DLEG the engine that drives economic development change.

That's why we've spent so much time on our action plans and on our vision and values. I spent some time carefully reading each and every plan, and they are great. I want to especially thank the ambassadors, who gave so much of their time and energy to get these done. You did a terrific job!

These are action plans with a capital A for action. We will implement them and we will do it together. Michigan is a great state, but multiple forces challenge our economy. We at DLEG have a critical role in fulfilling the state's efforts to improve and revitalize our economy. Remember, in the end, it's about how we use our limited resources, our creativity and innovation to grow jobs.

The governor recently asked each of us in the cabinet to describe what legacy we want to leave. I told her I want to pound the final nail into our rustbelt image's coffin. My number one mission is to develop and implement policies that create jobs for the new economy. The only way to make that happen is for all of us to have the same agenda and for all of us to work together to achieve it.

I am very encouraged by what I've seen in the Spirit of DLEG competition, in the action plans you've sent in, and in what we've accomplished together already.

- ❖ We launched MiTAPS, making Michigan the first state in the nation to offer an on-line, 24/7, Web-based licensing and permitting system.
- ❖ We launched Cool Cities and awarded 20 catalyst grants across the state.
- ❖ We created the new bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives to help us collect and use data more strategically.
- ❖ We launched 13 Regional Skills Alliances that will align the needs of business, labor and education.

- ❖ MEDC, working with the Department of Treasury, has launched three venture capital funds totaling half a billion dollars that support entrepreneurs by providing an investment in their ideas and their innovation. These will create jobs.

When we developed the executive team's action plan, we listened to what you've told us needs to be done and what needs to be improved or added to make our state No. 1 in economic development and our department an inclusive organization.

The executive team has three goals:

1. Create DLEG's identity and educate all stakeholders as to that identity.
2. Ensure our strategic direction and policies are in line with the governor's vision.
3. Align resources and motivate and empower employees so everyone has the tools needed to do the job.

We discussed DLEG's identity for quite a while and realized it's very simple. It's all about creating good jobs and great careers. Michigan must become known as the innovation-at-work state and be a magnet for both public and private investment.

Innovation is key to the four areas we are focused on. These include:

- ❖ our urban areas
- ❖ retaining and gaining business
- ❖ developing and supporting entrepreneurs
- ❖ having the best workforce in the world

These are our four roads in the governor's seven-point plan to grow Michigan.

I promise that all of us on the executive team will do a better job of giving you the tools you need to become the best of class in all four. We've listened to you and realize we need to make some changes.

- ❖ We're going to eliminate the bureau directors' meeting and replace it with a Leadership Council. This new council will meet monthly starting in October and be a strategy and information-sharing session. I will attend each meeting as will everyone on the executive team.



(Continued)

A Message from the Director

Putting Our Plans to Work (Continued)



Employee Growth & Development Team

Jim Smiertka, Chair
Maura Campbell
Dan Dykstra
Heather Lockhart
Mary Miller
Liza Estlund Olsen
Marti Reesman
Marge Sorge
Irma Zuckerberg

- ❖ I will provide you with updates on cabinet sessions and seek your advice and counsel on implementing the governor's initiatives.
- ❖ A member of the executive team will visit each bureau and agency twice a year to discuss strategic issues and get your feedback. We need to be sure our strategic direction and policies consistently align with the governor's.
- ❖ We're going to begin a leaders' e-bulletin that we'll send to you weekly beginning in October. It will give you quick bulleted updates on major DLEG issues such as information from cabinet meetings, major news events, a heads up on changes in the organization, and upcoming stories you can expect to see in the media.
- ❖ We are going to tap the Employee Growth and Development Team even harder and use their input in our decision-making. They did a terrific job coordinating the action planning process and pointing out the multiple challenges facing us.

Here's what I need from you. Please share your concerns and suggestions with us as they come up. It is the only way we will succeed and the only way we'll be able to create an inclusive organization where everyone knows why his or her job is important.

- ❖ You'll need to give the executive team a quarterly update on your progress. The

first one is due January 15. These are your report cards.

- ❖ I want you to do a report card on me, too. Next June I will ask you to fill out a form that grades my performance so I can see where I need to get better. Then I'll ask you to do another one at the end of the year.
- ❖ You'll also be responsible for making sure your team is kept up to date. I want you to hold a state of the bureau or agency meeting within two weeks of every State of DLEG meeting so you can update your team on our progress.
- ❖ I also want you to provide a communications plan for your agency or bureau for 2005 that will engage all employees and drive DLEG's identity into the organization. Media & Public Relations staff can help you with the meetings and communications plans.

Many of you already have made a good start. You have terrific ideas in your action plans that will help us make sure everyone knows what DLEG is, what we do and why we do it. As I read each of your action plans, I also saw a pattern of concerns: budget constraints, IT services, administrative support, training, communications, and people shortages.

These are big issues, but they are solvable if we work together. Collaboration and teamwork will make us successful. I am confident that each one of us can contribute to making DLEG a major factor in Michigan's renaissance!

DLEG Action Plan

The DLEG Action Plan book has been called the "blueprint" for our department's immediate future. So, what does it contain?

The Action Plan book is a compilation of 31 individual agency and bureau plans that align with DLEG's vision, mission, and values.

At the forefront of the book are several sections of an introductory nature. A section titled "Common Values" details and ranks predominant agency/bureau values. Another section called "Agency Needs" groups DLEG's needs identified from the individual plans according to themes. A third section is named "Integrated Action Plans" and demonstrates the alignment of DLEG initiatives with Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's seven roads.

The Employee Growth and Development Team, the ambassadors from the various agencies and bureaus in the department, and scores of other DLEG staff members devoted countless hours and professional effort and skill to this project.

A copy of the DLEG Action Plan book will be provided to each agency and bureau.

Mapping DLEG

Department employees who attended the State of DLEG meeting on September 22 donned cartographers' hats and applied their best thinking to a table exercise called "mapping DLEG."

The participants — grouped by agency and bureau — were asked to draw a circle and write their agency's or bureau's name in the middle. Then they were asked to add smaller circles around the large one to represent the units they work with. The nature of each line connecting a smaller circle to the middle circle identified the type of relationship that existed; e.g., a thick line indicated a close relationship.

Then the groups were asked to discuss issues such as which parts of the organization need more interaction — or improved interaction.

The exercise proved to be an eye-opener for many of the groups. Some discovered relationships they did not know existed. Others were able to discern how they could operate more

effectively if they had more communication with certain units.

For example, the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety group members said they would like to have more interaction with the Office of Career and Technical Preparation to promote apprenticeships. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) said it would benefit from closer relationships with Labor Market Information & Strategic Issues, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) in serving Michiganians with disabilities.

The value of the exercise will extend far beyond September 22 as each agency and bureau builds new and stronger ties with other units for future collaboration and teamwork.



Working on the mapping exercise are (clockwise beginning at 11 o'clock) Rita Canady, Dale Beachnau, Sabrina Witherspoon, and Myrtle Gregg-LaFay, all with the Office of Human Resources.

Team Problem Solving

Director David C. Hollister in his State of DLEG address September 22 noted that a pattern of concerns emerged from the action plans submitted by each agency and bureau.

These concerns were identified as:

- ❖ Budget constraints
- ❖ IT services
- ❖ Administrative support
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Communications
- ❖ People shortages

In another table exercise, the State of DLEG meeting attendees randomly formed 16 separate groups. Each group was given a slip of paper stating one of the six concerns and was asked to develop a strategy or strategies for removing barriers to positive change.

The solutions that emerged from these problem-solving groups were both creative and bold. Here's a sampling:

- ❖ Create an IT team within DLEG to deal with daily IT issues.
- ❖ Include rank-and-file employees in communications from the executive team.
- ❖ Establish an intradepartmental team to streamline processes that take an excessive amount of time, such as hiring, out-of-state travel approval, and contracting for services.
- ❖ Make DLEG directly responsible for developing its budget — and for oversight.

Jim Smiertka, emcee for the State of DLEG meeting, announced, "There is going to be follow-through on all of this."

The work sheets from each of the groups were collected for review and analysis as DLEG moves toward positive change.

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David C. Hollister, Director

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